

A
FLEETWAY
LIBRARY

**WAR
PICTURE
LIBRARY**

№ 32

1/-

CONVOY



ALSO ON SALE NOW
FOR WAR THRILLS... ACTION... DRAMA...

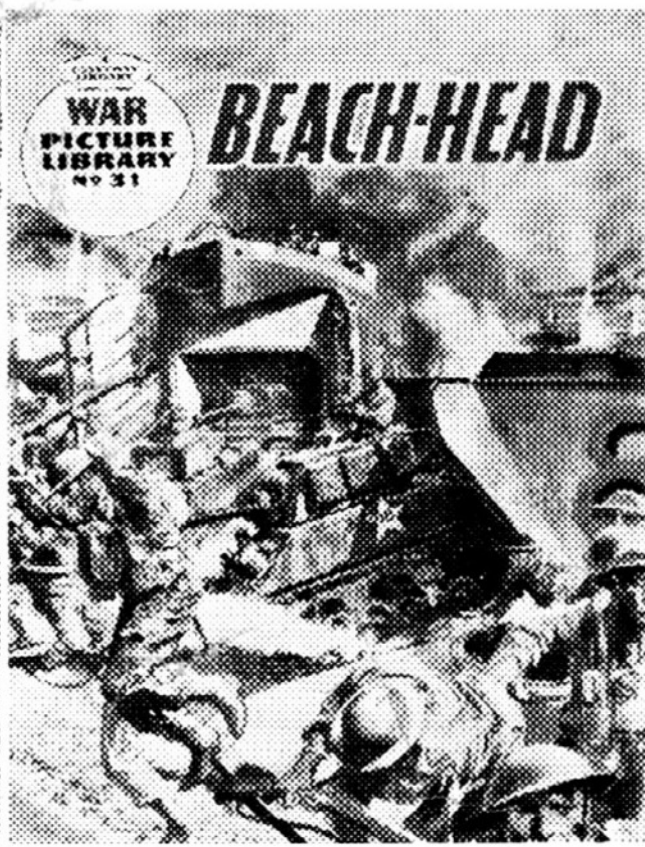
WAR PICTURE LIBRARY

No. 30—SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

No. 31—BEACH-HEAD



A young soldier, the sole survivor of a last ditch stand in Greece, takes another's identity and his fight to win back his honour and his name nearly costs him his life.



This is the story of one of the men who scouted the invasion beaches at Salerno and of his bid to snatch his captured comrades from the hands of the ruthless enemy.

Next month's **THREE** thrilling **WAR PICTURE LIBRARY** titles are :—

No. 33—UNDER FIRE

No. 34—FIX BAYONETS

No. 35—FULL STEAM

CONVOY



AT DAWN ON JUNE 22nd. 1941. THE STEEL - GREY LEGIONS OF NAZI GERMANY SMASHED ACROSS THE FRONTIERS OF SOVIET RUSSIA. BEHIND THE MARCHING MEN LAY A EUROPE PROSTRATE BENEATH THE JACKBOOT'S HEEL. ONLY BRITAIN'S SMALL BELEAGUERED ISLANDS REMAINED UNWILLING TO BOW TO NAZI MIGHT. IN A WEEK, THE RUSSIAN ARMIES WERE IN FULL RETREAT. IN A MONTH, THEY WERE REELING. BY THE END OF OCTOBER, THEIR POSITION WAS DESPERATE.

Chapter 1. THE WOLF PACK

... HOW WERE RUSSIA'S MILLIONS TO BE ARMED? WHERE WERE THE MUNITIONS OF WAR TO COME FROM — THE TANKS, THE SHELLS, THE HEAVY GUNS, THE PETROL, THE 'PLANES — WHICH ALONE COULD STEM THE NAZI TIDE?

FIRE!
SHOOT DOWN
THE FASCIST
DOGS!

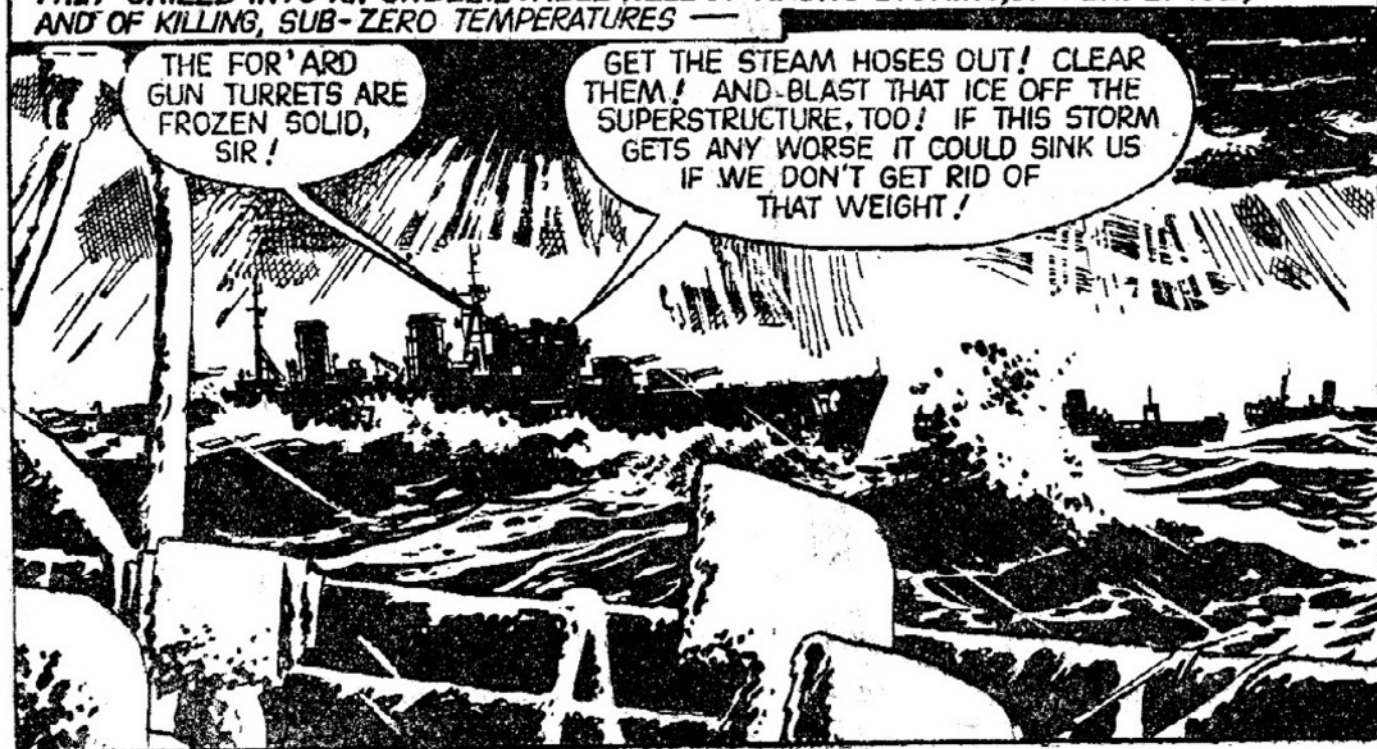
WITH RIFLES,
COMRADE? ONLY
A FEW BULLETS
AGAINST BOMBERS?
THIS IS
MADNESS!



THE ANSWER COULD ONLY BE — FROM BRITAIN. AND SO, AS THE IRON GRIP OF WINTER CLAMPED DOWN UPON THE NORTHERN SEAS, THE FIRST BRITISH CONVOYS SET SAIL. THEY SAILED INTO AN UNBELIEVABLE HELL OF ARCTIC STORMS, OF DEADLY ICE, AND OF KILLING, SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURES —

THE FOR'ARD
GUN TURRETS ARE
FROZEN SOLID,
SIR!

GET THE STEAM HOSES OUT! CLEAR
THEM! AND BLAST THAT ICE OFF THE
SUPERSTRUCTURE, TOO! IF THIS STORM
GETS ANY WORSE IT COULD SINK US
IF WE DON'T GET RID OF
THAT WEIGHT!



THE ICE, THE BITTER WIND, AND THE SEA WERE DEADLY ENEMIES — BUT NOT THE ONLY ONES THE CONVOYS HAD TO FACE. THE CLOUD-WRACKED, LEADEN SKIES HID GERMAN AIRCRAFT, AND, BENEATH THE SEA, LURKED GERMAN U-BOATS, SWORN TO PREVENT THE PASSAGE OF SUPPLIES TO RUSSIA.

RADIO SIGNAL FROM NAVAL HIGH COMMAND, HERR KAPITAN. A BRITISH CONVOY MAKING FIVE KNOTS ON COURSE TO MURMANSK —

WUNDERBAR! ONLY A FEW MILES AWAY FROM US! GIVE ME THAT SIGNAL!



THE U-BOAT COMMANDER GRINNED WOLFISHLY AS HE READ THE MESSAGE...

FORTY FAT MERCHANT SHIPS AND ONLY SIX OLD DESTROYERS AND TWO CRUISERS AS ESCORT! WORK OUT A COURSE IMMEDIATELY, HERR LEUTNANT, WE STRIKE AT DAWN. ORDER ALL OTHER U-BOATS IN THE AREA TO RENDEZVOUS WITH US FOR THE ATTACK!

JAWOHL, HERR KAPITAN!



THE LIEUTENANT TURNED AWAY SMARTLY TO CARRY OUT HIS ORDERS. THEN HE PAUSED —



TEN HOURS LATER, THE FIRST GREY LIGHT OF AN ARCTIC DAWN CREPT ACROSS THE BLEAK AND TURBULENT SEA AND GLEAMED DULLY ON THE DARK SINISTER SHAPES OF THE U-BOAT PACK GATHERED IN THE CONVOY'S PATH.

SEHR GUT! ALL HERE AND ALL IMPATIENT TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE ENEMY! HERR LEUTNANT—DO ALL KNOW THE CALEDONIA IS TO BE SPARED?

JA, HERR KAPITAN!

THEN. MAKE THE SIGNAL FOR THE ATTACK TO COMMENCE!

LIKE TWELVE STEEL SHARKS THE U-BOATS SLID BELOW THE SURFACE — EACH LADEN WITH DEATH-DEALING TORPEDOES, SOON TO BE AIMED AT THE HEART OF THE BRITISH CONVOY!

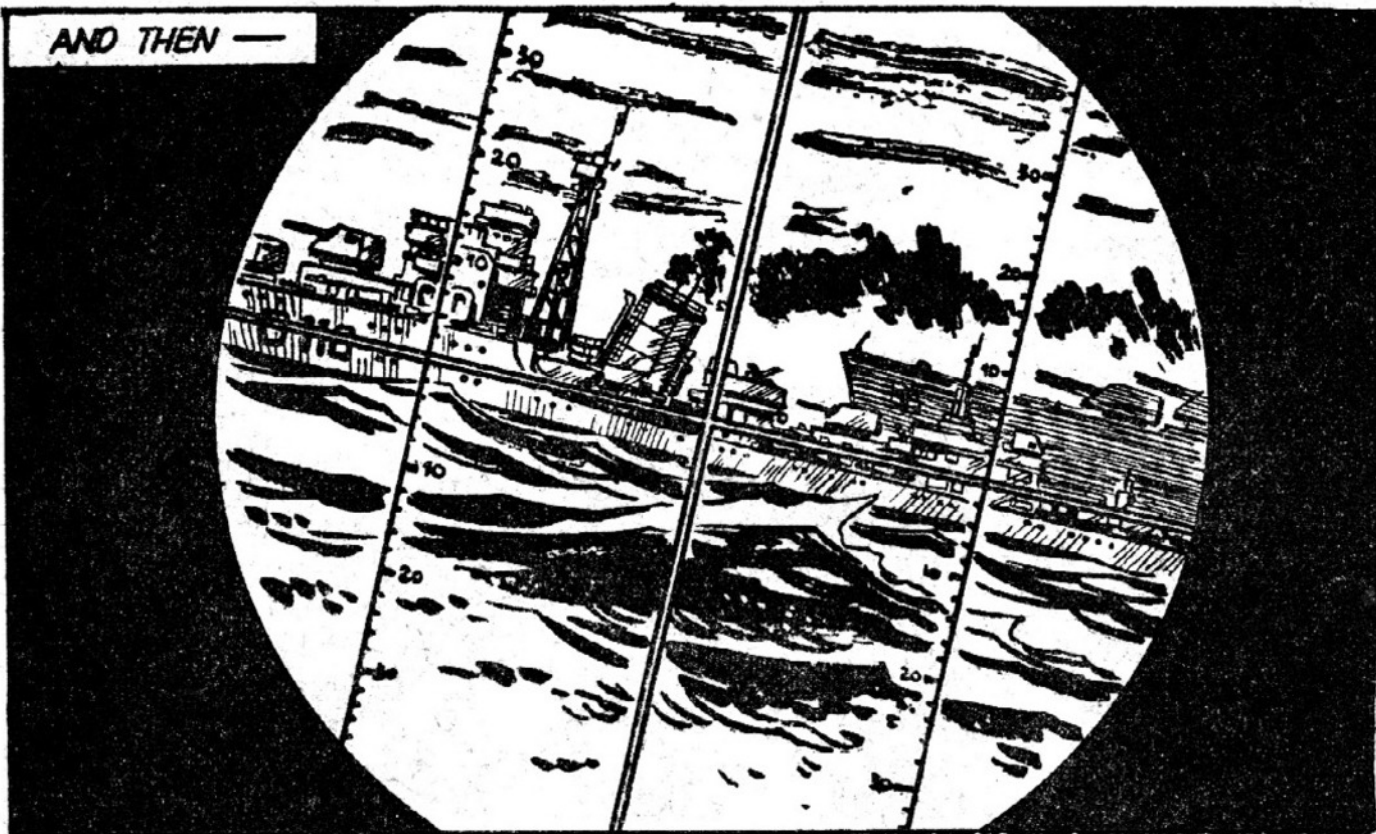


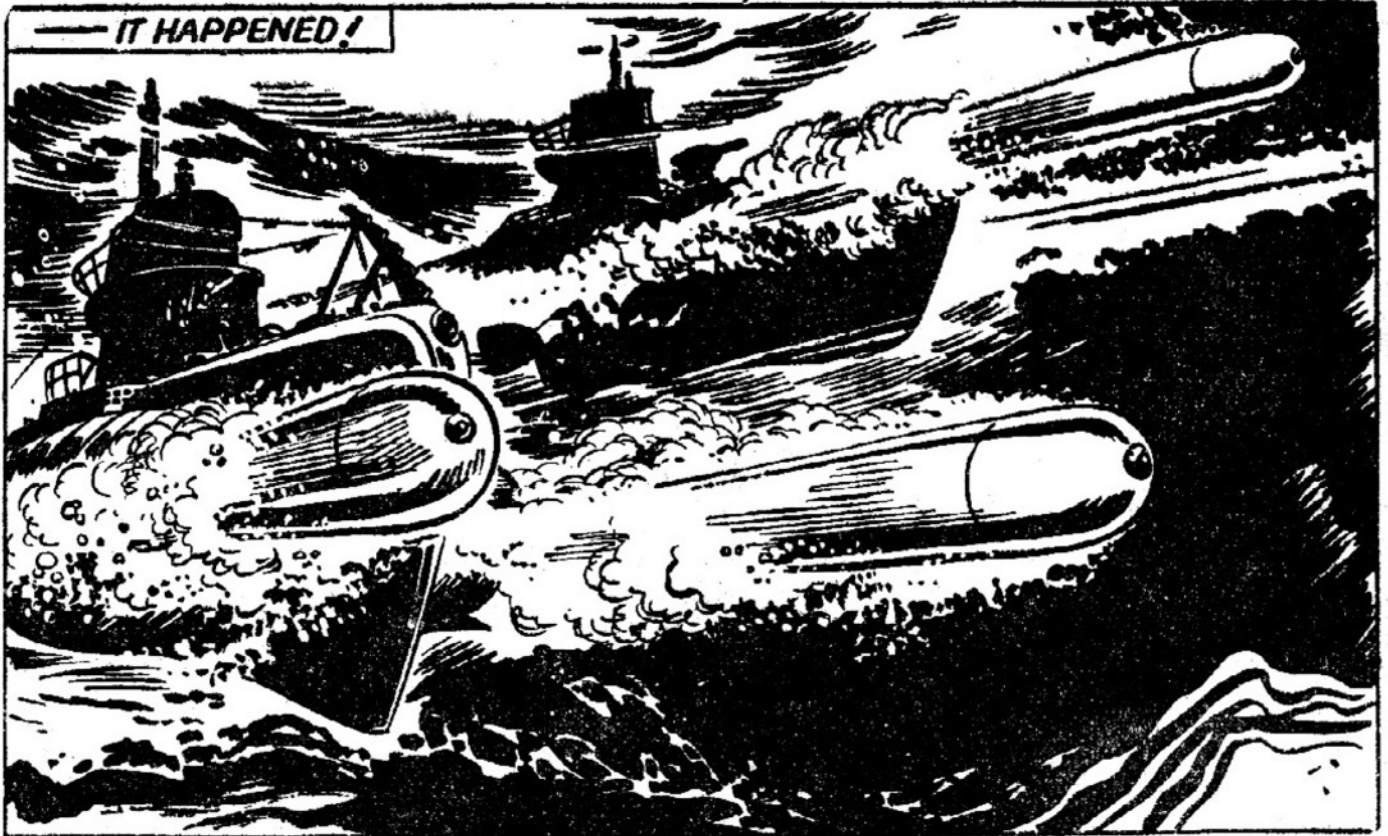
MEANWHILE, LITTLE MORE THAN TWO MILES AWAY, REAR ADMIRAL WILSON, THE FLAG OFFICER COMMANDING THE BRITISH CONVOY'S ESCORT FLOTILLA, STOOD ON THE BRIDGE OF THE CRUISER CALEDONIA AND SCANNED THE WATER AROUND HIM.

BETTER THAN I EXPECTED, CAPTAIN. THE MERCHANTMEN HAVE ALL KEPT TOGETHER PRETTY WELL DURING THE NIGHT. SEEMS QUIET ENOUGH, TOO....



AND THEN —





WITH AN EAR-SHATTERING ROAR, THE DESTROYER HARVEST, STEAMING ABREAST OF THE CALEDONIA, VANISHED IN SUDDEN SMOKE AND FLAME!



Convoy

CALEDONIA LEAPED FORWARD LIKE A SHELL OUT OF ONE OF HER OWN HEAVY GUNS. SHE CAME ROUND IN A GREAT HEELING, SKIDDING TURN, THREE SETS OF ALDIS LAMPS ALREADY STUTTERING OUT THE "MAINTAIN POSITION" TO THE MERCHANTMEN IN CONVOY. THE CRUISER KNIFED THROUGH THE WATER, BOILING FOAM PILED HIGH AT ITS BOWS, HEADING FOR THE ESTIMATED POSITION OF THE U-BOAT WHICH HAD DISEMBOWELLED HARVEST.

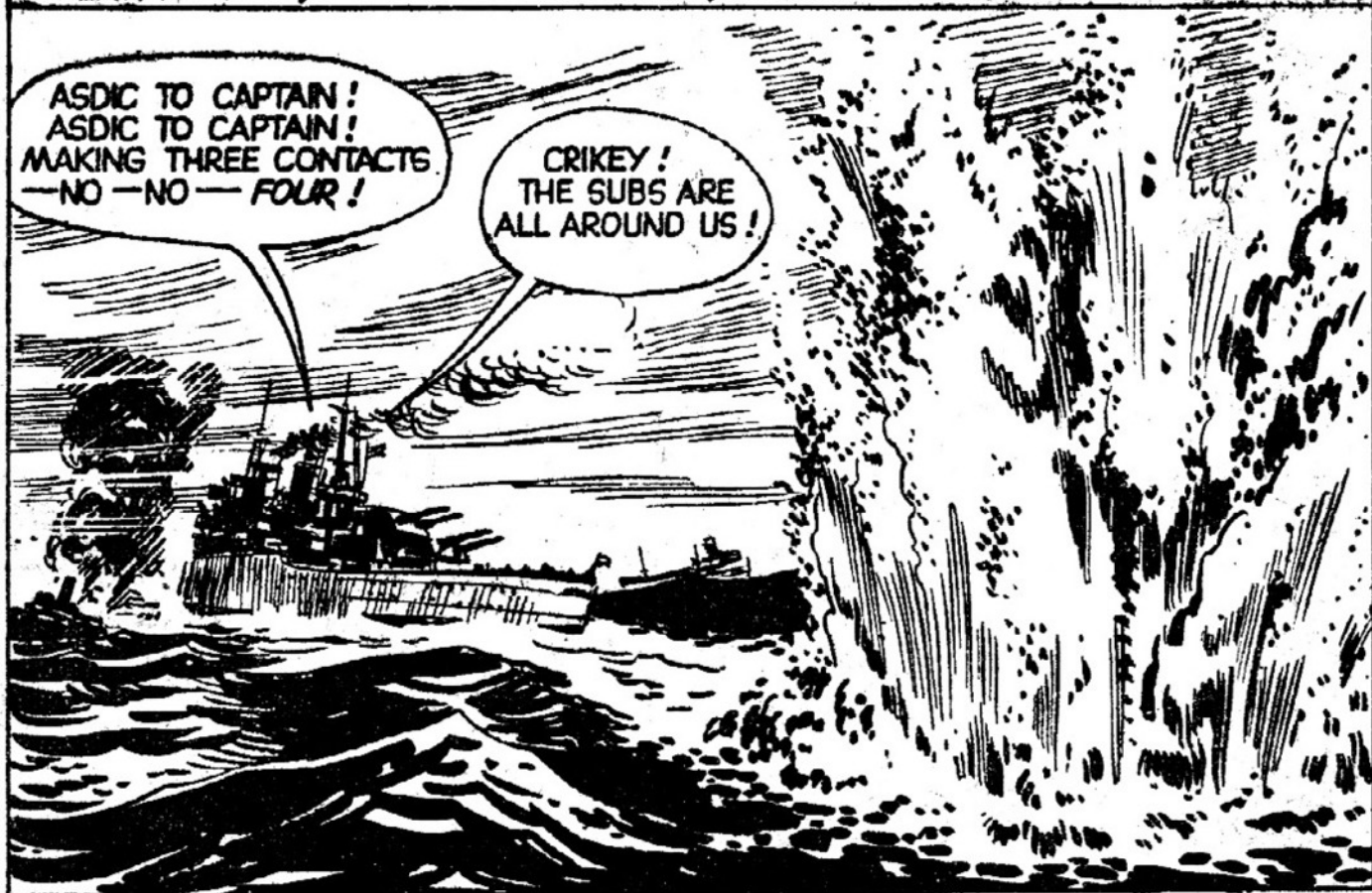
ASDIC CONTACT
GREEN SEVENTY —
CLOSING. VERY CLOSE
NOW. VERY CLOSE.

DEPTH
CHARGES
READY,
SIR!

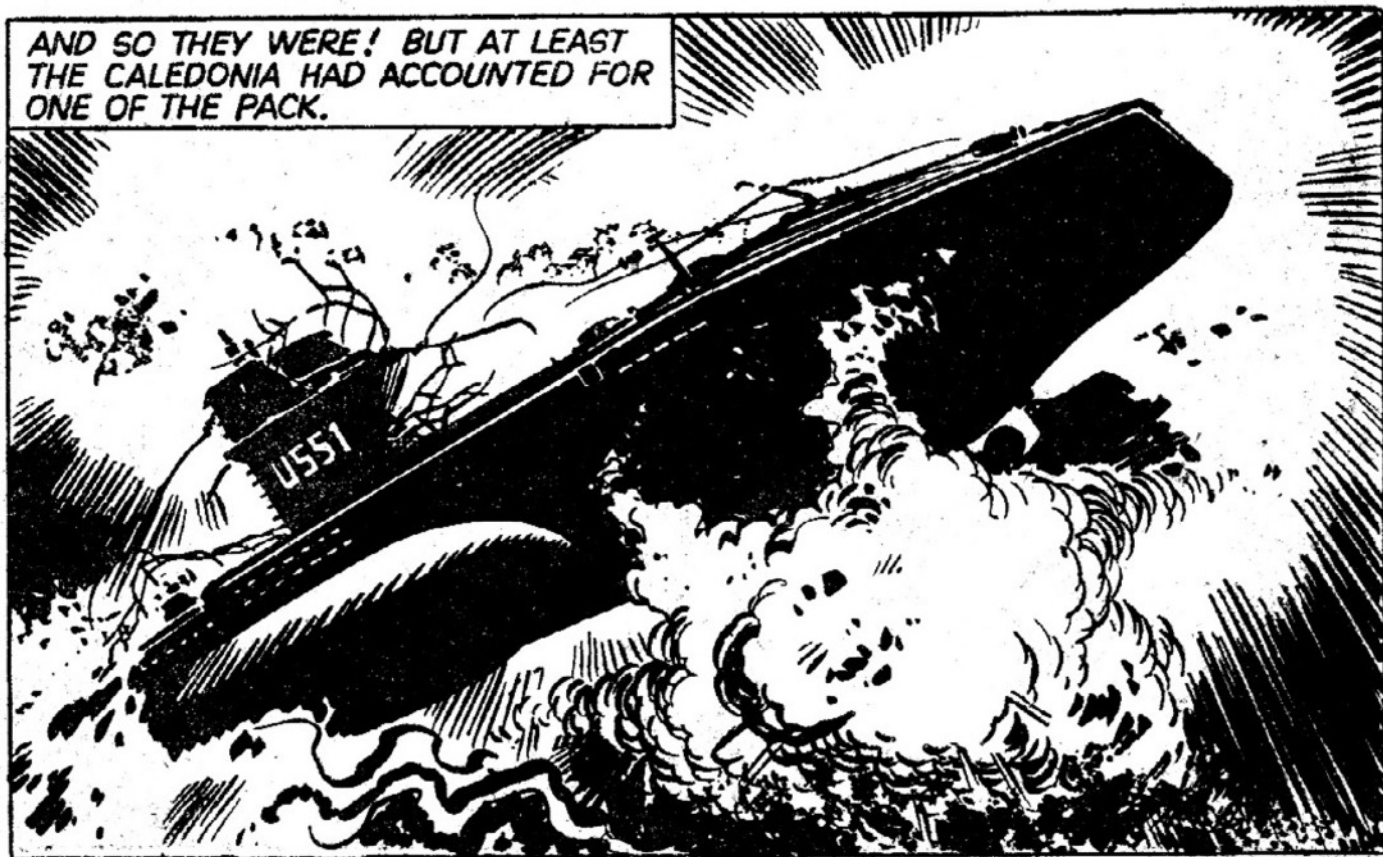




DEADLY BLACK DEPTH CHARGES WERE FLUNG HIGH IN THE AIR BEYOND THE CALEDONIA'S STERN. THERE FOLLOWED A MOMENT IN WHICH ALL TIME STOOD STILL, AND THEN, WITH A DEAFENING ROAR, THE SEA ERUPTED SKYWARDS.



AND SO THEY WERE! BUT AT LEAST THE CALEDONIA HAD ACCOUNTED FOR ONE OF THE PACK.



TOTALLY OUT OF CONTROL, THE U-BOAT SHOT TO THE SURFACE. FOR A LONG SECOND IT HUNG POISED, STANDING ALMOST ON END. AND THEN CAME A TERRIBLE INTERNAL EXPLOSION.



BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE.. FOR AS THE U-BOAT BROKE IN HALF WITH A RENDING, GRINDING ROAR AND PLUNGED DOWNWARDS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN, THE REST OF THE WOLF PACK STRUCK!



IN THE NEXT FOUR SECONDS, TWICE THAT NUMBER OF TORPEDOES FOUND THEIR MARK IN THE HULLS OF MERCHANTMEN! THE SEA WAS LITTERED WITH BURNING SHIPS. YET ANOTHER OIL TANKER WAS HIT AND BLAZING PETROL SWEEPED FORWARD—A WALL OF FLAME, THREATENING TO ENGULF THE SURVIVORS OF THE TORPEDOED VESSELS WHO STRUGGLED IN THE WATER.

PERMISSION TO
HEAVE TO AND
PICK UP
SURVIVORS,
SIR?

IF WE ARE STOPPED FOR
JUST ONE SECOND YOU
KNOW WHAT COULD
HAPPEN TO US!

I CAN'T LEAVE
THOSE MEN TO
BURN TO DEATH OUT
THERE, SIR! IF THE
FLAMES DON'T GET
'EM, THE COLD WILL!

FOR A VERY LONG
MOMENT THE REAR-
ADMIRAL SAID NOTHING—
AND ALL THE TIME HE
COULD HEAR THE CRIES
OF THE MEN TRAPPED BY
THE WALL OF FLAME
AND BURNING IN THE
WATER. ABRUPTLY HE
NODDED.

ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN
CARFAX! GO AND GET
'EM! BUT—FOR
PITY'S SAKE—
BE QUICK!

AYE AYE,
SIR!



CALEDONIA MADE A SWEEPING, SLIDING TURN AND CAME IN TOWARDS THE MEN IN THE WATER. HER SPEED DROPPED. FIFTEEN KNOTS — TEN — FIVE —

STOP ALL ENGINES!

JUMP TO IT, LADS! MAN THE NETS! GET THOSE SURVIVORS INBOARD!



FROM BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE WAVES, U-BOAT OFFICERS EYED THE SCENE WITH SAVAGE SATISFACTION TOUCHED WITH NOT A LITTLE REGRET.

WHAT A SIGHT! AND WHAT A TARGET, HERR KAPITAN! *DONNERWETTER!* WHAT I'D GIVE TO PLANT TWO TIN FISH INTO THE SIDE OF THAT CRUISER! BUT — ORDERS ARE ORDERS!

SAVE YOUR REGRETS, HERR LEUTNANT! LOOK AT THE MAULING WE'VE GIVEN THIS CONVOY ALREADY — AND THERE ARE OTHER TARGETS JUST AS GOOD AS THE CRUISER. THE BRITISH WILL BE LUCKY IF THEY GET FOUR MERCHANT SHIPS TO MURMANSK OUT OF THE FORTY!



THE BRITISH WERE LUCKY. DURING THE REST OF THAT DREADFUL DAY THE WEATHER GOT STEADILY WORSE, SO THAT, IN LATE AFTERNOON THE U-BOAT PACK HAD TO TAKE REFUGE IN DEEP WATER TO ESCAPE THE STORM RAGING ON THE SURFACE, AND A BADLY BATTERED CONVOY WAS ABLE TO LIMP TO MURMANSK HARBOUR TWO DAYS LATER.

THE POOR OLD ESCORTS AIN'T BEEN SO LUCKY, EH, NOBBY? TWO CRUISERS AND SIX DESTROYERS WE HAD WHEN WE LEFT THE SHETLANDS, AND LOOK WHAT WE'VE GOT NOW!

JERRY GAVE US A PROPER PASTING AND NO MISTAKE!



THOSE U-BOATS SEEMED TO BE WAITING FOR US! AND VISIBILITY WAS SO BAD ON THOSE TWO DAYS BEFORE THE ATTACK THAT YOU COULDN'T SEE YOUR HAND IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE HALF THE TIME! SO HOW DID JERRY KNOW WHERE TO FIND US? TELL ME THAT!



THE SAME QUESTION WAS WORRYING REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON, AND, AFTER HE HAD MADE HIS REPORT, IT DEEPLY DISTURBED THE ADMIRALTY IN LONDON. WITHIN HOURS, A SMALL, THIN, GREY-HAIRED OLD MAN HAD BEEN CALLED FOR A CONSULTATION. THE MAN'S NAME WAS RAVEN. HIS BUSINESS WAS COUNTER-ESPIONAGE.

WILSON SAYS THAT AT NO TIME WERE ANY ENEMY AIRCRAFT OR SHIPS SIGHTED BEFORE THE ATTACK, AND YET IT'S QUITE PLAIN THAT THE GERMANS KNEW WHERE THAT CONVOY WAS AND HAD TIME TO PREPARE A HOT RECEPTION FOR IT!

SO THE NAZIS HAD SOME OTHER SOURCE OF INFORMATION, EH? THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR MY DEPARTMENT.



BACK IN HIS OWN OFFICE, RAVEN DROPPED THE REPORT ON HIS DESK AND SPOKE QUIETLY INTO AN INTERNAL TELEPHONE.

SEND FOR JAMES STAFFORD!



Chapter 2. WHO IS THE TRAITOR ?

JAMES STAFFORD WAS ONE OF THE RAVEN'S SECRET AGENTS. IN THE OPINION OF SOME PEOPLE HE WAS THE BEST OF RAVEN'S AGENTS. CAREFULLY AND QUIETLY, RAVEN TOOK HIM THROUGH THE STORY OF REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON'S ILL-FATED CONVOY TO MURMANSK:

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED, STAFFORD, AND IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORSE — MUCH WORSE — IF, FOR ONCE, THE WEATHER HADN'T BEEN ON OUR SIDE.

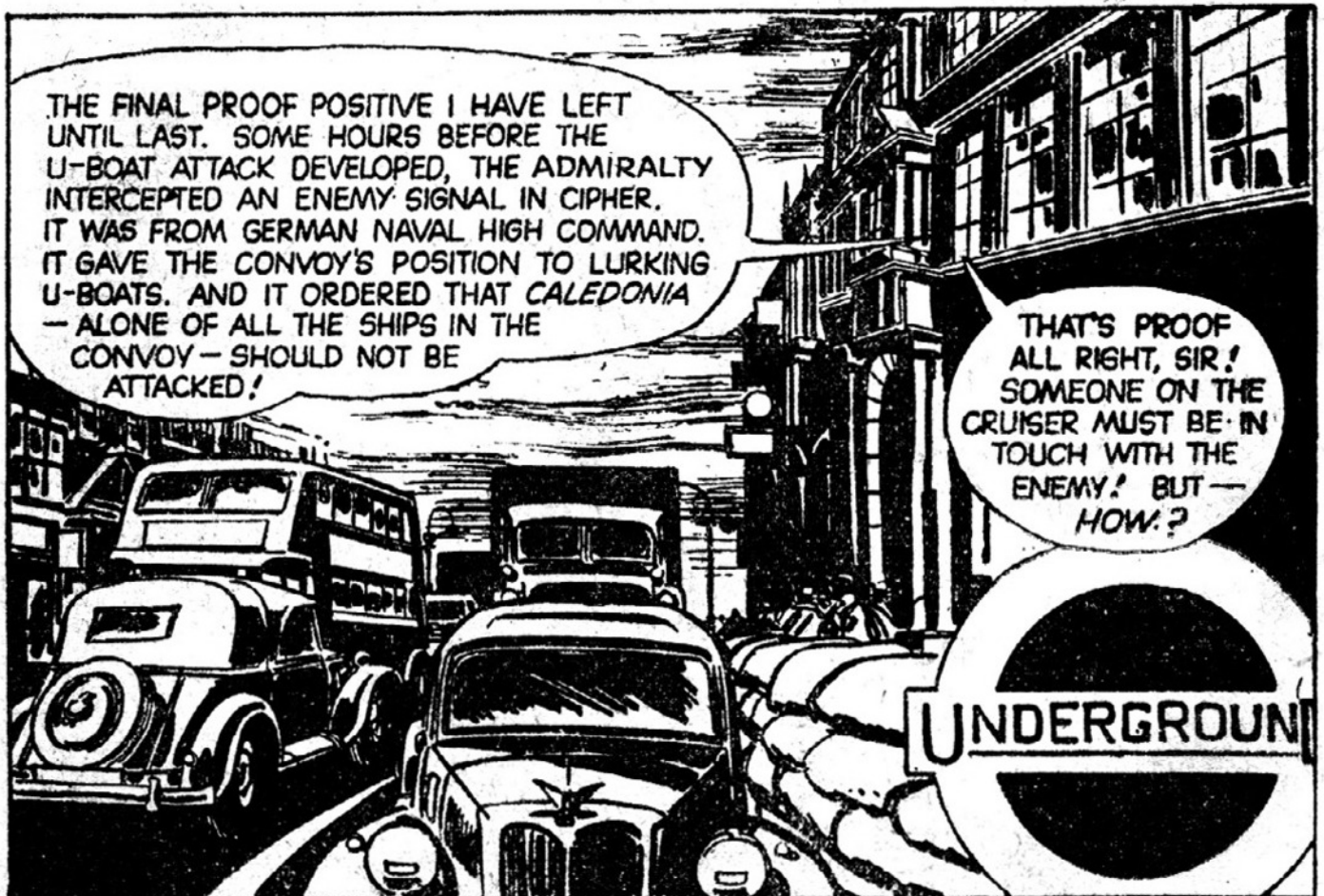
—THE WHOLE CONVOY MIGHT HAVE BEEN WIPED OUT. YES, SIR, I SEE THAT —



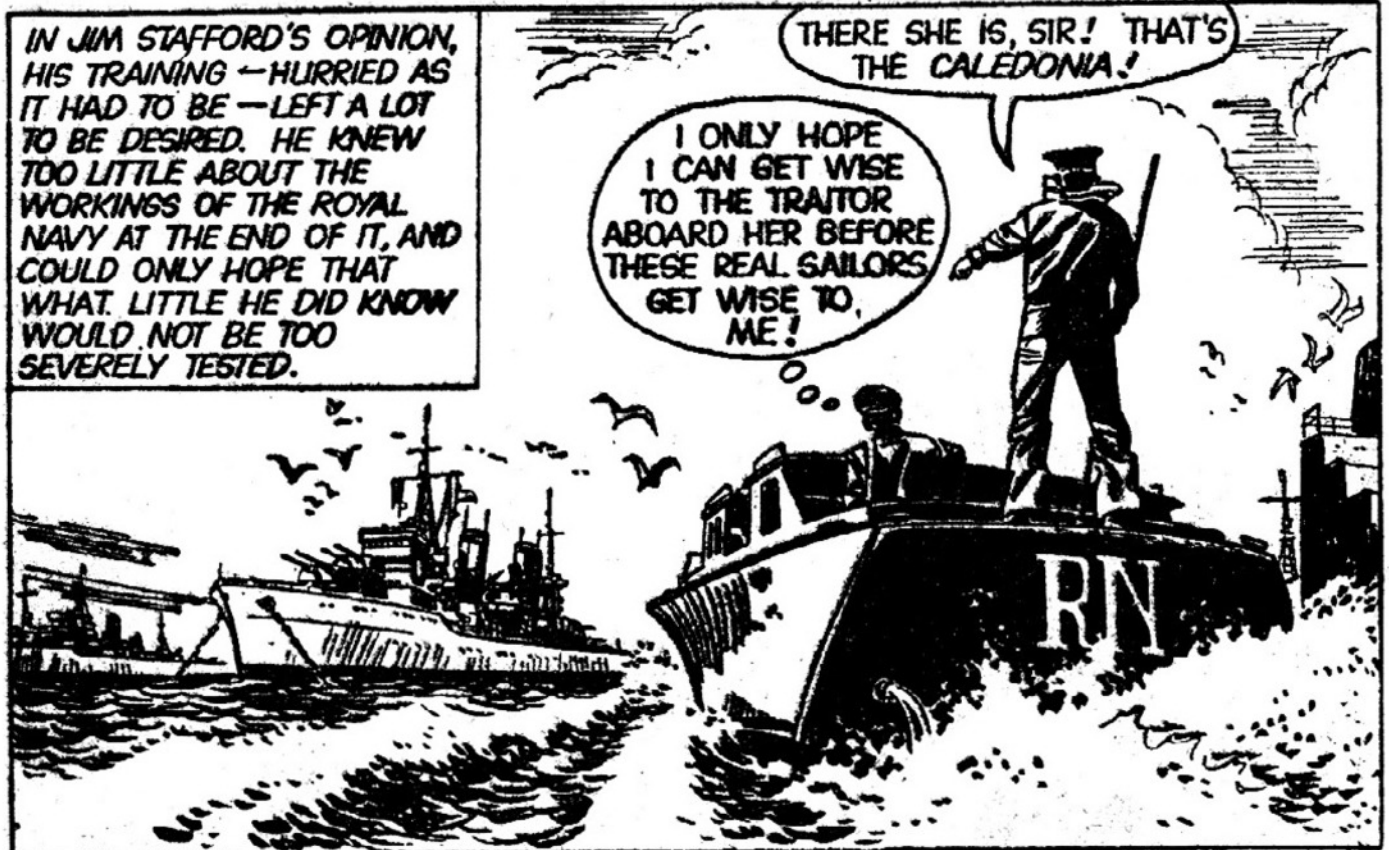
RAVEN SHOOK HIS HEAD.

NOT THE WHOLE CONVOY. AND THAT'S WHAT MAKES OUR JOB A LITTLE EASIER. WAITING FOR YOU, I'VE HAD TIME TO DO A LITTLE RESEARCH. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT CONVOYS LED BY CALEDONIA HAVE RUN INTO WOLF PACKS THAT SEEMED TO BE EXPECTING THEM —









JIM CLIMBED THE GANGWAY AND SALUTED AS HE REACHED THE DECK.

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER
JAMES STAFFORD,
REPORTING FOR DUTY.

WELCOME ABOARD,
COMMANDER. I'LL HAVE
YOU SHOWN TO YOUR
CABIN. THE ADMIRAL'S
ASHORE AT THE MOMENT,
SO YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT
TO REPORT TO HIM.

JIM DECIDED THE SOONER HE STARTED GETTING TO KNOW THE OTHER OFFICERS AND MEN ABOARD THE CALEDONIA THE QUICKER HIS WORK WOULD BE DONE.

THANKS FOR THE WELCOME,
COMMANDER. HUH! ISN'T
IT SILLY — WE'RE THE
SAME RANK AND WE'RE
'COMMANDER-ING' EACH
OTHER ALL THE TIME.
MY NAME'S JIM.

AND MINE IS
LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER
SEWELL — R.N. THE
RATING HAS GOT YOUR
GEAR. HE'LL SEE
YOU BELOW.





THE NEXT THIRTY-FIVE MINUTES OF JIM'S TIME WERE TAKEN UP WITH MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS STEWARD AND GETTING HIS KIT STOWED IN HIS QUARTERS. THEN HE WENT FORWARD, TO THE WARDROOM.



CAPTAIN CARFAX APPEARED NOT TO NOTICE THE SOUR NOTE IN THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S VOICE....



I'M GLAD TO MEET YOU, COMMANDER, YOU'RE POSTED TO THE ADMIRAL'S PERSONAL STAFF?

THAT'S RIGHT, SIR!

YOU MUST GET TO KNOW THE REST OF THE WARDROOM. COMMANDER FLAHERTY!

SIR —?

'GET TO KNOW THE REST OF THE WARDROOM' THE CAPTAIN HAD SAID. JIM STAFFORD KNEW QUITE A LOT ABOUT THE WARDROOM AND ITS OCCUPANTS ALREADY! HE HAD FELT THE TENSION IN THE AIR — A TIGHT, ELECTRIC FEELING. THE CALEDONIA'S OFFICERS WERE DEFINITELY NOT A BAND OF BROTHERS! IN FACT FROM ALL JIM STAFFORD HAD HEARD, HE DOUBTED IF THEY WERE EVEN FIGHTING THE SAME WAR! THEY WERE FIGHTING EACH OTHER — NOT THE GERMANS! THERE WAS SOMETHING VERY WRONG HERE IN THE WARDROOM OF THE CALEDONIA!



INTRODUCE STAFFORD ALL ROUND, FLAHERTY. COMMANDER FLAHERTY IS OUR SHIP'S SURGEON, MISTER STAFFORD.

GLAD TO KNOW YOU, COMMANDER.

SURGEON — COMMANDER, IF YOU PLEASE, YOUNG MAN! BUT JUST CALL ME 'DOC' — EVERYBODY DOES! STEWARD — I'M PRESCRIBING A WHISKY FOR MISTER STAFFORD. IRISH — OF COURSE!



AND NOW ANOTHER VOICE WAS HEARD. A HARSH VOICE.

I'D LIKE TO HEAR THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION TOO, COMMANDER!

I WASN'T TALKING TO YOU, MISTER TORRINGTON! BUT SINCE YOU'VE STUCK YOUR NOSE IN, I'LL ASK YOU A QUESTION. WHY DID YOU PUT ONE OF MY ORDERLIES ON CAPTAIN'S REPORT THIS MORNING?

TORRINGTON'S MOUTH TIGHTENED.

HE WAS INSOLENT, THAT'S WHY!

WHAT DID HE SAY?





BUT TORRINGTON DID NOT TAKE JIM STAFFORD'S OUTSTRETCHED HAND. FURIOUSLY HE SWUNG ROUND ON HIS HEEL, AND STALKED AWAY.

ACH, HE'S A MEAN, BAD MAN LIKE HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM! SPITEFUL AND VICIOUS! I'VE KNOWN HIM FROM A BOY. HIS FATHER OWNED LAND AT WEXFORD, IN IRELAND. A TERRIBLE, CRUEL LANDLORD HE WAS — UNTIL WE MADE IRELAND TOO HOT TO HOLD HIM DURING THE REBELLION! TORRINGTON AND SEWELL ARE TWO OF A KIND. THEY'D MAKE GOOD NAZIS — BOTH OF 'EM!



JIM STAFFORD WATCHED THE ANGRY IRISHMAN THOUGHTFULLY.

BUT YOU STILL HAVEN'T ANSWERED THE QUESTION I ASKED YOU. WHY, IF YOU HATE THE ENGLISH, ARE YOU A COMMANDER IN THE ROYAL NAVY?

WELL! BUT IT'S THE *BRITISH* NAVY, ISN'T IT? SURE, THAT MEANS IT'S AS MUCH IRISH AS ANYTHING ELSE. COME ON NOW, LET'S MEET THE OTHER OFFICERS AND THEN I'LL TAKE YOU OVER THE SHIP.



THE NEXT FEW MINUTES LEFT JIM WITH A CONFUSED IMPRESSION OF A SEA OF FACES.

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER DRAKE, GUNNERY OFFICER AND STOKES, OUR SPARKS—

GLAD TO KNOW YOU.



I'M CARVER —
DEPTH CHARGES.

HE'S THE HERO OF OUR LAST
CONVOY, AND THIS IS SURGEON—
LIEUTENANT SMART. I'M
MAWSON—RADAR—

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SEWELL HAD COME UP BEHIND THE OTHER OFFICERS. NOW HE INTERRUPTED BITINGLY.

MISTER MAWSON IS THE MAN WHO SHOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO WARN US WE WERE RUNNING INTO A U-BOAT PACK ON OUR LAST CONVOY — AND DIDN'T!

WHY — YOU —!

GENTLEMEN! PLEASE!

LIEUTENANT MAWSON BRUSHED AWAY COMMANDER FLAHERTY'S RESTRAINING HAND. HIS EYES WERE HOT WITH ANGER.

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER MEANS BY THAT REMARK. U-BOATS DON'T SHOW ON RADAR UNLESS THEY'RE SURFACED.

THEY GENERALLY DO SURFACE BEFORE AN ATTACK. EVEN THE HUMBLEST RATING KNOWS THAT, MISTER MAWSON! EVEN THE HUMBLEST RATING KNOWS THE EXTENT OF YOUR FAILURE TO WARN US!

AN ANGRY RETORT ROSE TO THE YOUNG RADAR OFFICER'S LIPS, BUT IT WAS THEN THAT LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER DRAKE, THE GUNNERY OFFICER, INTERVENED.

AND THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW, COMMANDER. RADAR IS STILL IN ITS INFANCY. UNDER ARCTIC CONDITIONS THERE ARE TIMES WHEN IT DOESN'T WORK VERY WELL. MAWSON CAN'T BE BLAMED FOR THAT.

THANKS, SIR.

WELL, I STILL SAY—

LET'S GET OUT OF THIS MADHOUSE, EH, STAFFORD? LET ME SHOW YOU OVER THE SHIP.

DURING THE NEXT HOUR, JIM STAFFORD TOURED THE CRUISER. HE WENT EVERYWHERE AND TALKED TO ALL THE RATINGS HE COULD. HE BECAME CONVINCED THAT THE TRAITOR HE WAS SEEKING WAS PROBABLY AN OFFICER. AN OFFICER HE HAD ALREADY MET!

ONLY AN OFFICER WOULD HAVE THE DEGREE OF PRIVACY ESSENTIAL TO A MAN PLAYING A DOUBLE GAME. THE RATINGS ATE, LIVED AND SLEPT CROWDED TOGETHER ON MESSDECKS. WHAT SECRETS COULD THEY KEEP FROM EACH OTHER?

SO WHAT DO I DO? SEARCH ALL THE OFFICERS' CABINS? I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR, SO THAT'S NO USE! NO—I'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP MY EYES AND EARS OPEN—WATCH AND WAIT UNTIL SOMEONE MAKES A SLIP. BUT, IF THE TRAITOR IS AN OFFICER... I WONDER... WHICH ONE?

AND THAT WASN'T ALL ACTING LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER STAFFORD WONDERED. EQUALLY PUZZLING AND EQUALLY IMPORTANT—HOW WAS THE TRAITOR COMMUNICATING WITH THE ENEMY? HOW?

Chapter 3. MURMANSK RUN

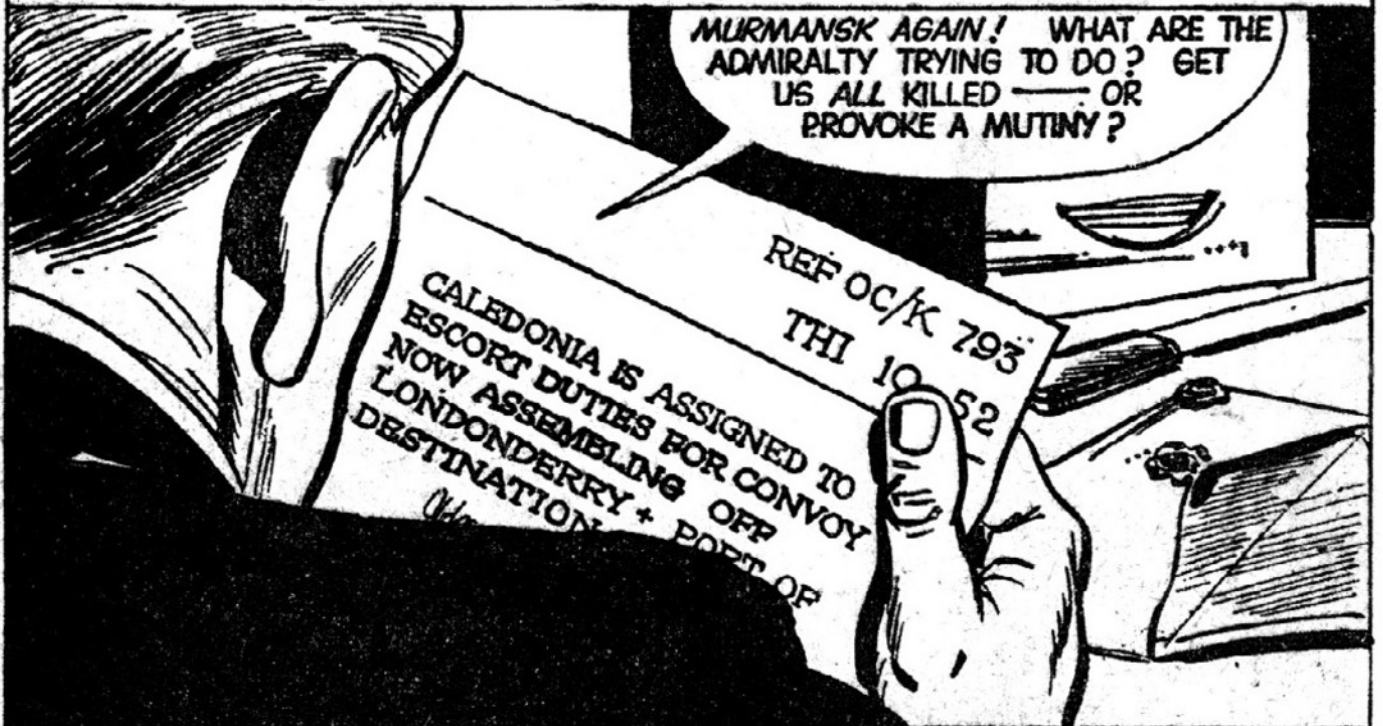
THE CALEDONIA WENT TO WAR AGAIN ON THE EVENING TIDE. AS DUSK FELL SHE SLID DOWN THE FIRTH OF CLYDE TOWARDS THE SEA: SHE WAS ALONE..



I WONDER WHERE SHE'S AWAY TO, JOCK?

SOMEWHERE WARM, I'LL BET! WHAT I'D GIVE TO BE GOING WITH HER. MY FEET ARE COLD!

WHERE WAS THE CALEDONIA BOUND? IN HIS CABIN, REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON BROKE OPEN HIS SEALED ORDERS. AS HE READ THEM HIS FACE PALED.



MURMANSK AGAIN! WHAT ARE THE ADMIRALTY TRYING TO DO? GET US ALL KILLED — OR PROVOKE A MUTINY?

WITH A HAND THAT TREMBLED SLIGHTLY, REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON REACHED FOR THE SHIP'S TELEPHONE.

SEND LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER STAFFORD TO MY CABIN AT ONCE, AND HAVE ALL THE OTHER OFFICERS ASSEMBLE IN THE WARDROOM. I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY TO THEM.



WHEN JIM STAFFORD REACHED THE REAR-ADMIRAL'S CABIN HE FOUND THE SENIOR OFFICER IN A GRAVE MOOD.

IT'S MURMANSK AGAIN, STAFFORD. IT WAS BAD ENOUGH LAST TIME, HEAVEN KNOWS, BUT THE WEATHER SAVED US. WE CAN'T RELY ON THAT AGAIN. I'M AFRAID WE'VE GOT TO RELY ON YOU, STAFFORD. WE'VE ALL GOT TO RELY ON YOU. YOU'VE GOT TO UNMASK THIS TRAITOR AND STOP HIM COMMUNICATING WITH THE ENEMY — OR WE'RE DONE FOR!



ONLY MINUTES LATER, REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON WAS FACING THE CRUISER'S ASSEMBLED OFFICERS IN THE WARDROOM AND HAD TOLD THEM THEIR DESTINATION.

WE ARE GOING TO ESCORT A FAST CONVOY... AND YOU ALL KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS. THE CONVOY WILL NOT HALT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. NO SHIP WILL BE DETACHED TO PICK UP SURVIVORS IN THE EVENT OF ENEMY ATTACK.

PERMISSION TO SPEAK, SIR? I HOPE THE ENGINES WILL STAND UP TO IT!



REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON WENT ON TO DEAL IN DETAIL WITH THE ORDERS HE HAD RECEIVED FROM THE ADMIRALTY. BUT JIM STAFFORD, LOOKING INTO THE FACES OF THE OFFICERS IN FRONT OF HIM, DOUBTED IF ANY ONE OF THEM WAS REALLY LISTENING TO THE ESCORT FLOTILLA'S COMMANDER. EACH MAN WAS BACK IN A NIGHTMARE PAST — HEARING AGAIN THE CRIES OF BURNING COMRADES FLOUNDERING IN THE ICY, ARCTIC WATERS: SEEING AGAIN WHOLE SHIPS REARING SKYWARD IN STABBING LIGHT AND SEARING FLAME AS TORPEDOES STRUCK HOME... THIS TIME THERE WOULD BE NO HOPE OF RESCUE. THIS WAS TO BE A FAST CONVOY — BY ADMIRALTY ORDER. THE RUSSIANS WERE DESPERATELY SHORT OF MUNITIONS OF WAR.

THE CALEDONIA'S OFFICERS HAD NOT RECEIVED THE NEWS ENTHUSIASTICALLY, BUT THEY HAD RECEIVED IT QUIETLY. THE MEN ON THE MESSDECKS, HOWEVER, SPOKE THEIR MIND.

...WE'RE ORDERED TO CONVOY MERCHANTMEN TO MURMANSK AGAIN, AND THIS IS TO BE A NON-STOP TRIP...

A FAST CONVOY! TO CROWN IT ALL! THE MURMANSK RUN ITSELF IS BAD ENOUGH, BUT—

WHAT'S A 'FAST' CONVOY, MATE?

IF YOUR SHIP'S HIT, THEY LEAVE YOU TO DROWN, THAT'S WHAT IT IS!

A MINIMUM SPEED OF FIFTEEN KNOTS WILL BE MAINTAINED THROUGHOUT THE VOYAGE. IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO STOP ANY SHIP FOR ANY REASON...

THEY'RE OUT TO KILL US ALL! IF THE JERRIES DON'T GET US THE FISH WILL!

LLOYD! STEWART! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SEWELL, THE SHIP'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER, STRODE QUICKLY ACROSS THE MESSDECK. JAMES STAFFORD AND A MASSIVE MASTER-AT-ARMS FOLLOWED, A LITTLE MORE SLOWLY.



THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S EYES FLASHED DANGEROUSLY. HIS THIN LIPS TWISTED INTO A GNARL.



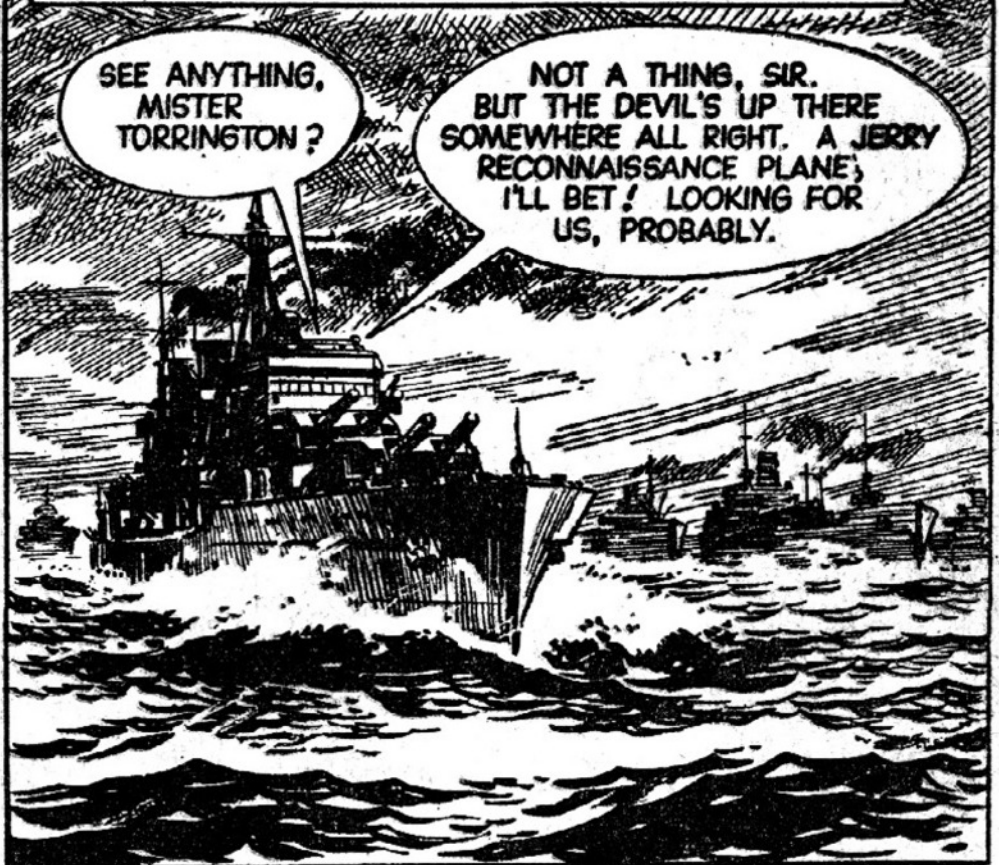


THE NEXT DAY SAW THE CALEDONIA OFF LONDONDERRY — A DAY OF CONFERENCES AS THE CAPTAINS OF THE ESCORT FLOTILLA AND THE MASTERS OF THE MERCHANT SHIPS CAME ABOARD THE CRUISER TO BE BRIEFED. THEN, ONCE MORE, THE CALEDONIA SAILED. THIS TIME ON THE NON-STOP TRIP INTO THE HELL OF ICE AND THE EVER-PRESENT FEAR WHICH WAS A CONVOY TO MURMANSK. . .

IT WAS ON THE SECOND DAY OUT FROM LONDONDERRY THAT THEY HEARD THE SOUND OF WHAT COULD ONLY BE NAZI AIRCRAFT ENGINES. THE PLANE CIRCLED THE CONVOY AS, ON THE BRIDGE OF THE CALEDONIA, LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SEWELL, OFFICER OF THE WATCH, VAINLY PEERED THROUGH HIS BINOCULARS.

SEE ANYTHING, MISTER TORRINGTON?

NOT A THING, SIR. BUT THE DEVIL'S UP THERE SOMEWHERE ALL RIGHT. A JERRY RECONNAISSANCE PLANE, I'LL BET! LOOKING FOR US, PROBABLY.



THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S EYES NARROWED. HIS MOUTH TIGHTENED. THREE SWIFT STRIDES TOOK HIM TO THE RADAR SPEAKING TUBE.

LIEUTENANT MAWSON — WHAT THE DEVIL ARE YOU DOING DOWN THERE! IS EVERYONE IN THE RADAR ROOM ASLEEP? FOR YOUR INFORMATION THERE'S A GERMAN AIRCRAFT FLYING AROUND UP HERE! I'M TELLING YOU — AND YOU SHOULD BE TELLING ME!



AT THE OTHER END OF THE SPEAKING TUBE, LIEUTENANT MAWSON FLUSHED ANGRILY.

IT'S ONLY JUST COME ON TO THE SCREEN, SIR. IT'S VERY WEAK—

JUST COME ON TO THE SCREEN? THE THING'S BEEN FLYING ROUND HERE FOR THE LAST TEN MINUTES AND IT'S PRACTICALLY ON TOP OF US! WELL, WHERE IS IT? GIVE ME A HEIGHT AND BEARING!

ON THE BRIDGE, BY THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S SIDE, TORRINGTON PUT IN...

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO OPEN FIRE ON THE PLANE, ARE YOU, SIR? THAT WOULD BE AN ABSOLUTE GIVEAWAY. IF WE CAN'T SEE HIM, HE CAN'T SEE US.

YOU'RE NAVIGATION OFFICER, MISTER TORRINGTON! YOU ATTEND TO YOUR JOB, AND I'LL ATTEND TO MINE!



CAPTAIN CARFAX HAD APPEARED ON THE BRIDGE, CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON.



TROUBLE,
MISTER SEWELL?

THERE'S A GERMAN
RECONNAISSANCE PLANE UP THERE,
SIR, AND RADAR'S FALLEN DOWN ON THE
JOB AGAIN. THEY CAN'T GIVE
ME A BEARING.

LET ME
TALK
TO THEM!

THE REAR-ADMIRAL'S VOICE CRACKLED SHARPLY DOWN THE SPEAKING TUBE.

MAWSON! ADMIRAL SPEAKING!
LISTEN TO ME! I WANT A SET
OF BEARINGS ON THAT GERMAN
PLANE AND THEY'VE GOT TO BE
DEAD ACCURATE! IS THAT
UNDERSTOOD? WE CAN'T GIVE
IT ANY TIME TO WIRELESS
OUR POSITION BACK TO ITS
BASE. WELL—WHAT
CAN YOU DO?

NOT MUCH, SIR. THE
TRACE KEEPS
FADING.





IN THE RADAR ROOM, LIEUTENANT MAWSON HEARD THE HARD, ANGRY NOTE IN THE REAR-ADMIRAL'S VOICE. HE, TOO, FELT ANGRY IN HIS TURN. DID THE ADMIRAL SUSPECT HIM OF WORKING FOR THE GERMANS OR SOMETHING? IT WASN'T HIS FAULT THAT THE RADAR SETS WEREN'T FUNCTIONING PROPERLY...



IN THE MAIN DIRECTOR TOWER, LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER DRAKE, THE GUNNERY OFFICER, GRABBED THE PHONE AS SOON AS THE BELL BEGAN TO RING.



DRAKE —?
ADMIRAL HERE.
THERE'S A GERMAN
RECONNAISSANCE PLANE
OVERHEAD. RADAR
BEARINGS ARE
COMING THROUGH.
STAND BY TO
FIRE.

IF THE CRUISER OPENED FIRE ON THE NAZI PLANE THE FIRST SHELLS FROM HER GUNS MUST STRIKE THE TARGET, OR ALL WAS LOST. WOULD THE RADAR BEARINGS BE ACCURATE OR NOT? COULD DRAKE AFFORD TO TAKE A CHANCE?




TRANter,
BEFORE RADAR
WE HAD SOUND LOCATORS.
ARE THEY STILL
WORKING?

I WANT THAT
GERMAN AIRCRAFT
TRACKED BY SOUND,
TRANter!

THOSE GREAT BIG EAR-SHAPED THINGS,
YOU MEAN, SIR? YES, THEY'RE STILL
WORKING. BUT, AS YOU KNOW,
SIR, THEY NEVER WERE
MUCH GOOD.





THE CALEDONIA SHIVERED. THE GUNS, TRACKING THE PLOT DRAKE HIMSELF HAD GIVEN THEM, BELCHED SMOKE AND FLAME. SHELLS TORE HOLES IN THE LOW-LYING CLOUD. MULTIPLE POM-POMS STUTTERED A CHANT OF DEATH. AND THEN...

WE'VE
DONE IT!
WE GOT
HIM!

HIT IT, BY
HEAVENS! IT'LL
COME DOWN IN
THE SEA!

THE RATING WAS WRONG! LIKE A STONE THE NAZI AIRCRAFT FELL, AND THE WAVES CAME UP TO MEET IT. BUT, AT THE CONTROLS, BURNING AND CRYING OUT WITH PAIN, HIS CREW DEAD AROUND HIM, THE GERMAN PILOT FOUGHT TO KEEP HIS AIRCRAFT AIRBORNE. FOUGHT — AND WON! ITS NOSE LIFTED. TWENTY FIVE FEET ABOVE THE SEA IT LURCHED INTO HORIZONTAL FLIGHT.





Convoy





THE REAR-ADMIRAL REACHED THE GUTTED BRIDGE AND LOOKED HARD FROM ONE MAN TO ANOTHER.



Chapter 4. TRAIL OF TREACHERY

DURING THE NEXT FEW HOURS, THE STORY OF HOW DRAKE HAD WORKED OUT HIS OWN BEARINGS TO SHOOT DOWN THE NAZI PLANE SPREAD THROUGH THE SHIP. THE GUNNERY OFFICER WAS HAILED AS A HERO. ONLY ONE DISCORDANT VOICE WAS RAISED AGAINST HIM.

NO DISCIPLINE, THAT'S WHAT I SAY! WHERE WOULD WE BE IF EVERYONE FOLLOWED DRAKE'S EXAMPLE, AND DID WHAT THEY LIKED! THE ADMIRAL HAD ORDERED MAWSON TO PROVIDE THOSE BEARINGS AND DRAKE SHOULD HAVE USED THEM!

BUT IF HE HAD, THE RECONNAISSANCE PLANE WOULD HAVE GOT CLEAN AWAY!



THAT DOESN'T MATTER! IT'S THE PRINCIPLE OF THE THING!



THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER STOPPED ABRUPTLY. HE JERKED ROUND. OUT OF THE CORNER OF HIS EYE HE HAD CAUGHT A SLIGHT MOVEMENT IN THE LURKING SHADOWS BEHIND THE LIFEBOATS....

IMPULSIVELY, HE
STARTED FORWARD.

WHO'S THERE ?
THERE IS
SOMEONE
THERE —



THE NEXT INSTANT, THE SHADOWY
FIGURE STRUCK !

AAARGH !



JIM STAFFORD LEAPT
FORWARD —

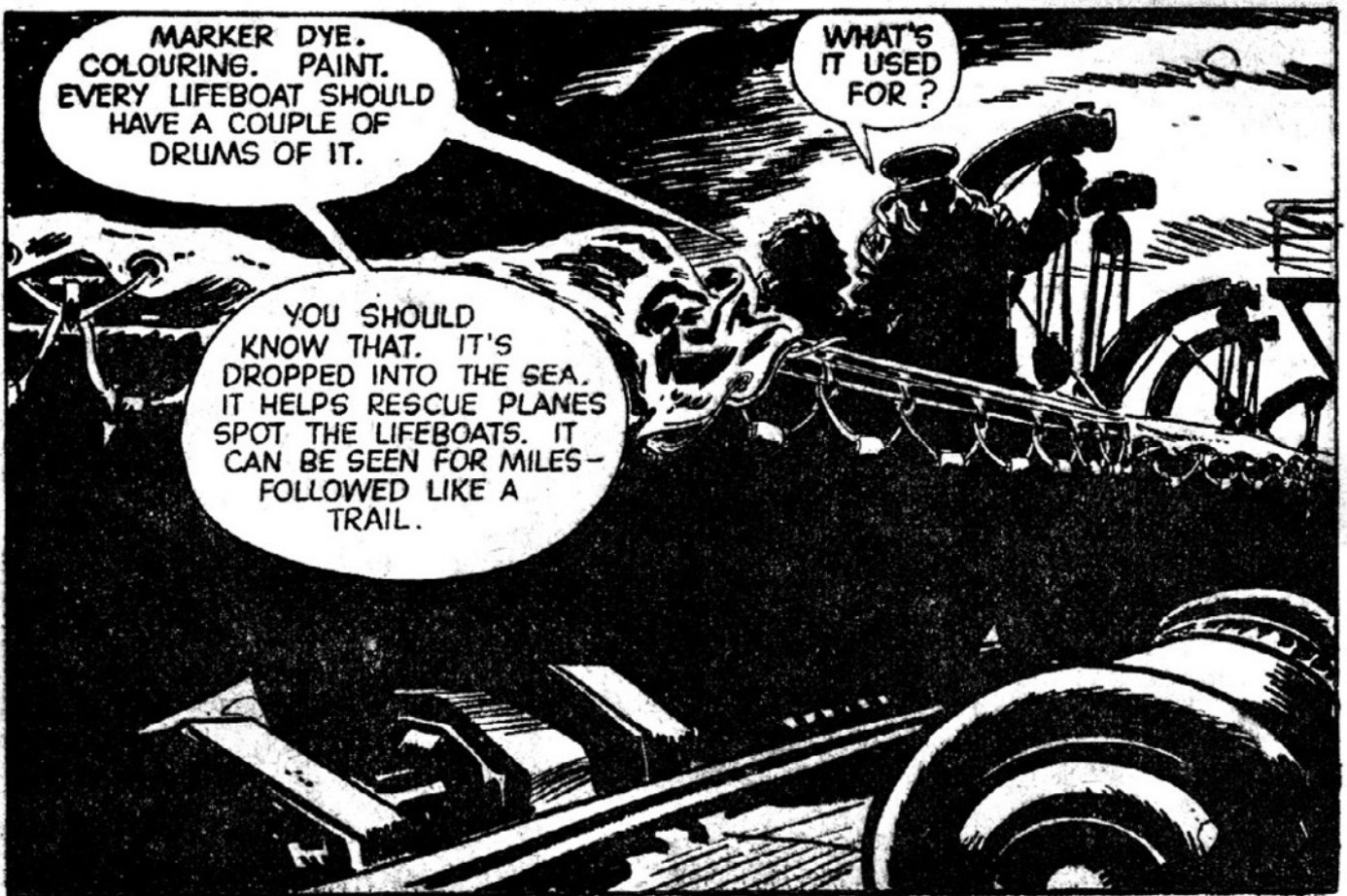
GOT
YOU!

BUT JIM STAFFORD SPOKE TOO SOON. AS HE CLOSED IN TO GRAPPLE WITH
LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SEWELL'S UNKNOWN ASSAILANT, THE MAN TWISTED
LIKE AN EEL. A SPLIT-SECOND LATER HE WAS RACING DOWN THE DECK. JIM
STAFFORD COULD NOT CATCH HIM.

WHAT
HAPPENED —?
OH, MY HEAD!

WHOEVER IT
WAS GOT AWAY. I
GRABBED FOR HIM
AND MISSED. BUT —
HULLO! WHAT'S BEEN
GOING ON HERE?





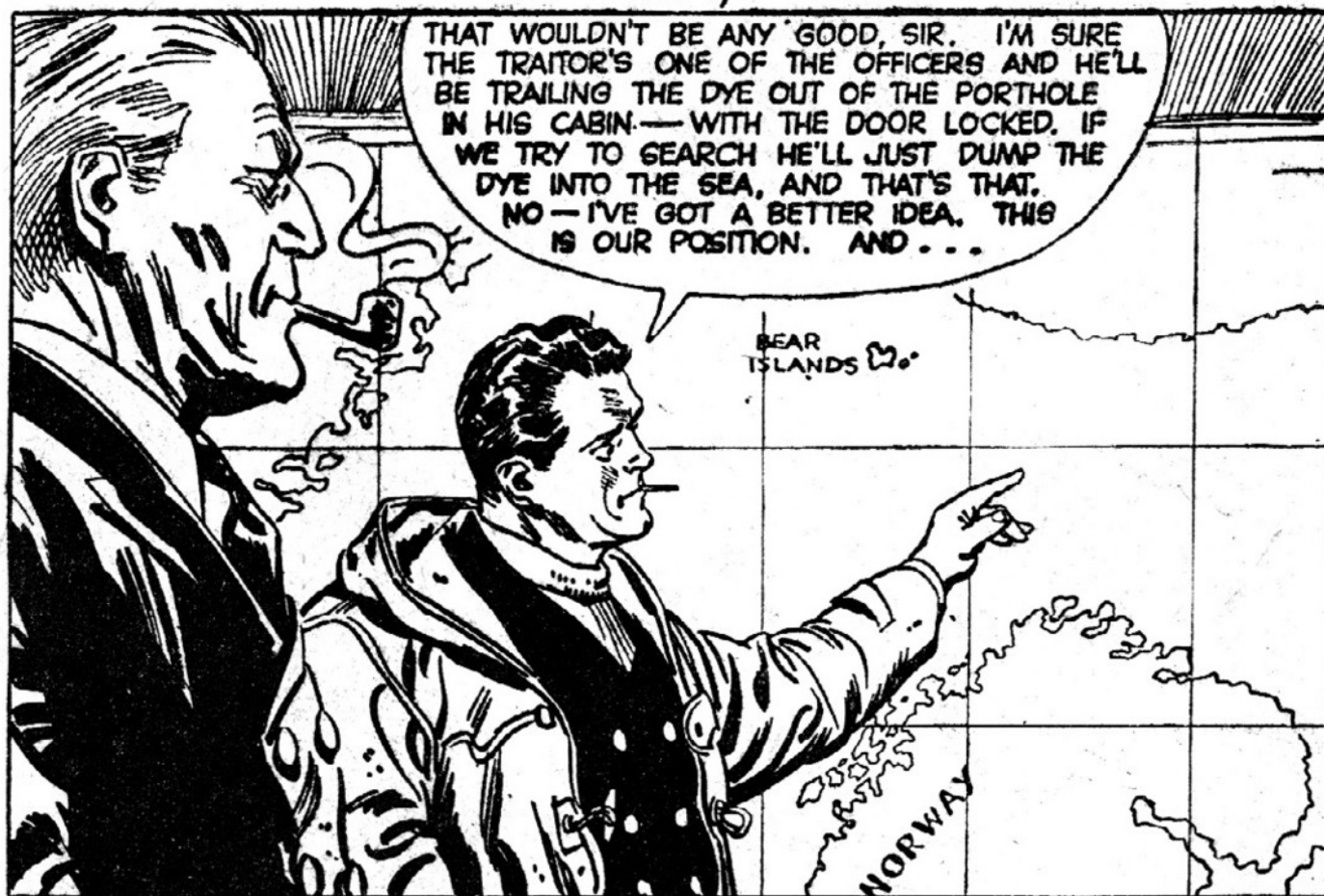
... PLANES... SEEN FOR MILES... FOLLOWED LIKE A TRAIL...



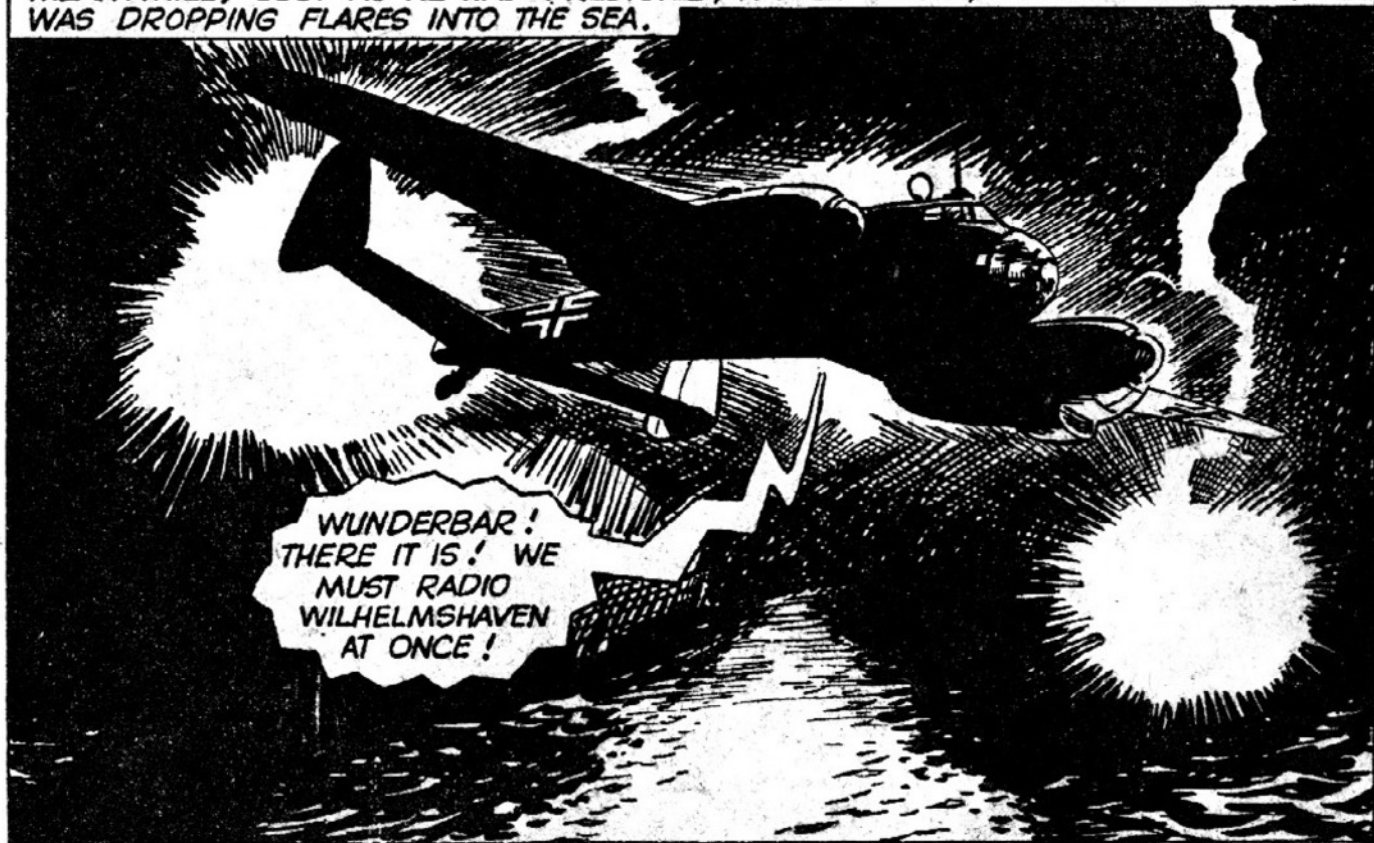
JIM STAFFORD DID NOT EXPLAIN. THERE WAS NOT TIME. HURRIEDLY HE MADE AN EXAMINATION OF THE OTHER LIFEBOATS. THE DRUMS OF DYE WERE MISSING FROM ALL OF THEM! MINUTES LATER HE WAS MAKING HIS REPORT TO THE REAR ADMIRAL.







QUICKLY, JIM STAFFORD EXPLAINED HIS PLAN TO THE REAR-ADMIRAL. MEANWHILE, JUST AS HE HAD PREDICTED, A NAZI PLANE, SOME MILES AWAY, WAS DROPPING FLARES INTO THE SEA.



AND AT NAZI NAVAL HIGH COMMAND AT WILHELMSHAVEN . . .

ONE OF OUR PATROL AIRCRAFT HAS SIGHTED THE TRAIL LAID BY OUR FRIEND ABOARD THE CALEDONIA. NOW WE KNOW THE POSITION OF THE CONVOY HAVE ALL U-BOATS IN THE AREA ALERTED. THEY STRIKE AT DAWN. THERE'LL BE MANY FAT MERCHANT SHIPS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA BEFORE EITHER OF US IS MUCH OLDER!

HEIL, HITLER!



BUT, ON THE CALEDONIA, JIM STAFFORD WAS NOT LETTING THE HOURS SLIP IDLY BY. AS THE TRAITOR, ALL UNSUSPECTING, CONTINUED TO LAY THE TRAIL THAT POINTED STRAIGHT TO THE HEART OF THE CONVOY, SIGNAL LIGHTS FLASHED FROM THE CALEDONIA'S MASTHEAD.

URGENT MESSAGE FROM THE CALEDONIA, SIR! IT MUST BE IMPORTANT. THEY'RE SENDING IT IN CODE.



AND IN THE COLD, GREY LIGHT OF DAWN...



CRUIKEY! WHERE HAVE THE MERCHANT SHIPS GONE TO? THEY'VE VANISHED!

SURPRISED, MISTER MAWSON?

THE RADAR OFFICER WAS SURPRISED, AND WITH GOOD REASON. WHEN HE HAD GONE TO HIS CABIN THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, THE CRUISER AND ITS TEN ESCORTS HAD BEEN GUARDING SEVENTY-SIX MERCHANTMEN. NOW NOT ONE OF THEM WAS IN SIGHT. THE ELEVEN SHIPS OF THE ESCORT FLOTILLA WERE NOW SAILING ACROSS AN EMPTY SEA. OR WAS IT EMPTY?

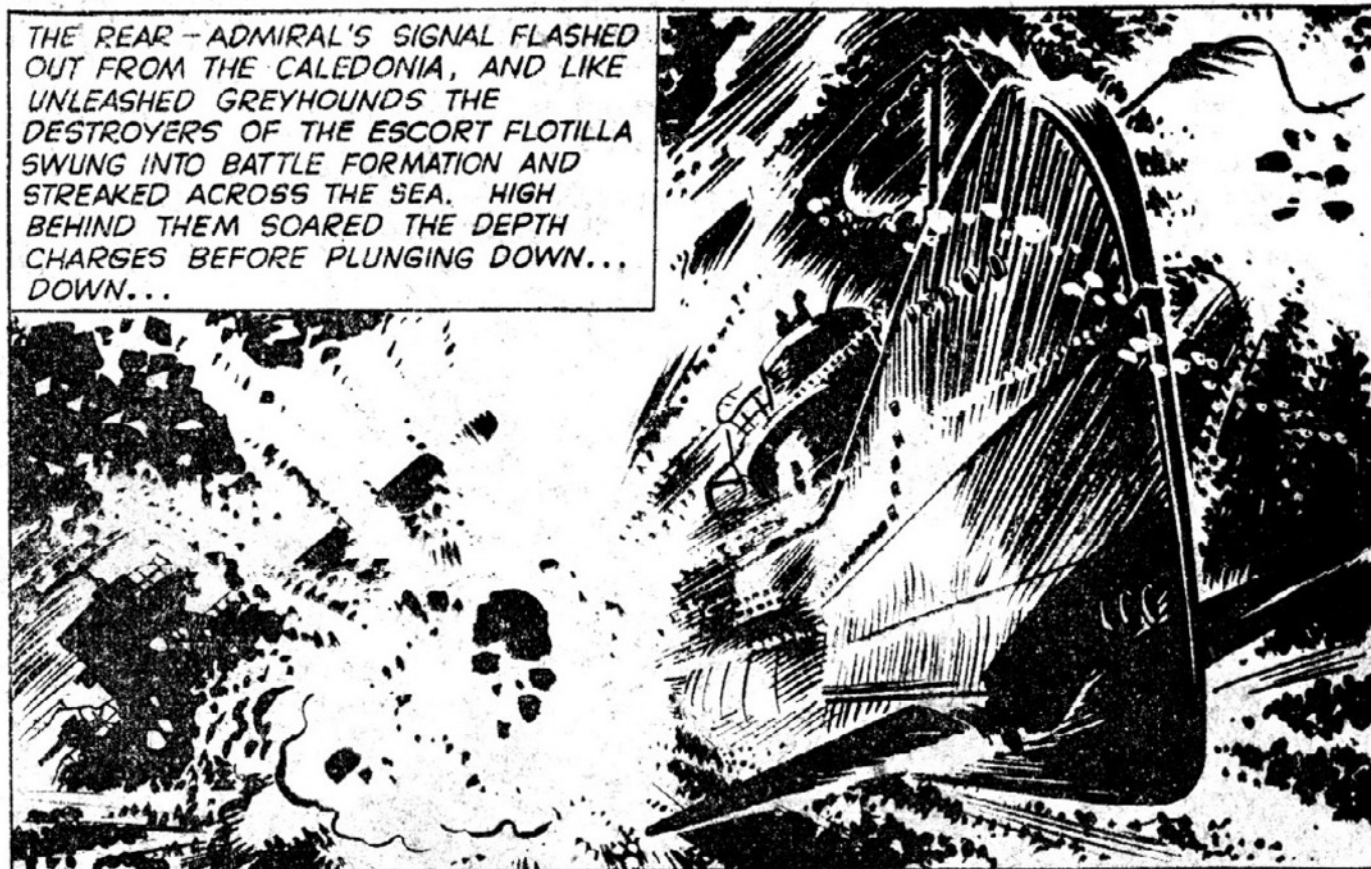


HIMMEL! ALL I CAN SEE ARE WARSHIPS! THEY'RE COMING THIS WAY—AND FAST. SOMETHING HAS GONE WRONG!

SOMETHING HAD INDEED GONE WRONG — FROM THE NAZI POINT OF VIEW. THANKS TO JIM STAFFORD THERE WERE TO BE NO EASY PICKINGS FOR THE U-BOAT PACK. THAT DAY!



THE REAR — ADMIRAL'S SIGNAL FLASHED OUT FROM THE CALEDONIA, AND LIKE UNLEASHED GREYHOUNDS THE DESTROYERS OF THE ESCORT FLOTILLA SWUNG INTO BATTLE FORMATION AND STREAKED ACROSS THE SEA. HIGH BEHIND THEM SOARED THE DEPTH CHARGES BEFORE PLUNGING DOWN... DOWN...



Convoy



ANOTHER U-BOAT, CRIPPLED BY
DEPTH-CHARGES, WAS FLUNG UP
OUT OF THE SEA.





ALL OVER AN AREA OF FOUR SQUARE MILES THE SAME SCENE WAS BEING REPEATED. THIS TIME IT WAS THE U-BOATS WHICH DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE!

DESTROYER SCIMITAR
REPORTING ANOTHER HIT,
GIR. THAT'S TEN U-BOATS
SUNK!

THERE'S SOME NAZI
SURVIVORS IN THE WATER
OVER THERE, CAPTAIN, WE'VE
BROKEN SO MANY RULES ON
THIS CONVOY WE CAN BREAK
ANOTHER ONE. STAND
BY TO PICK 'EM UP.

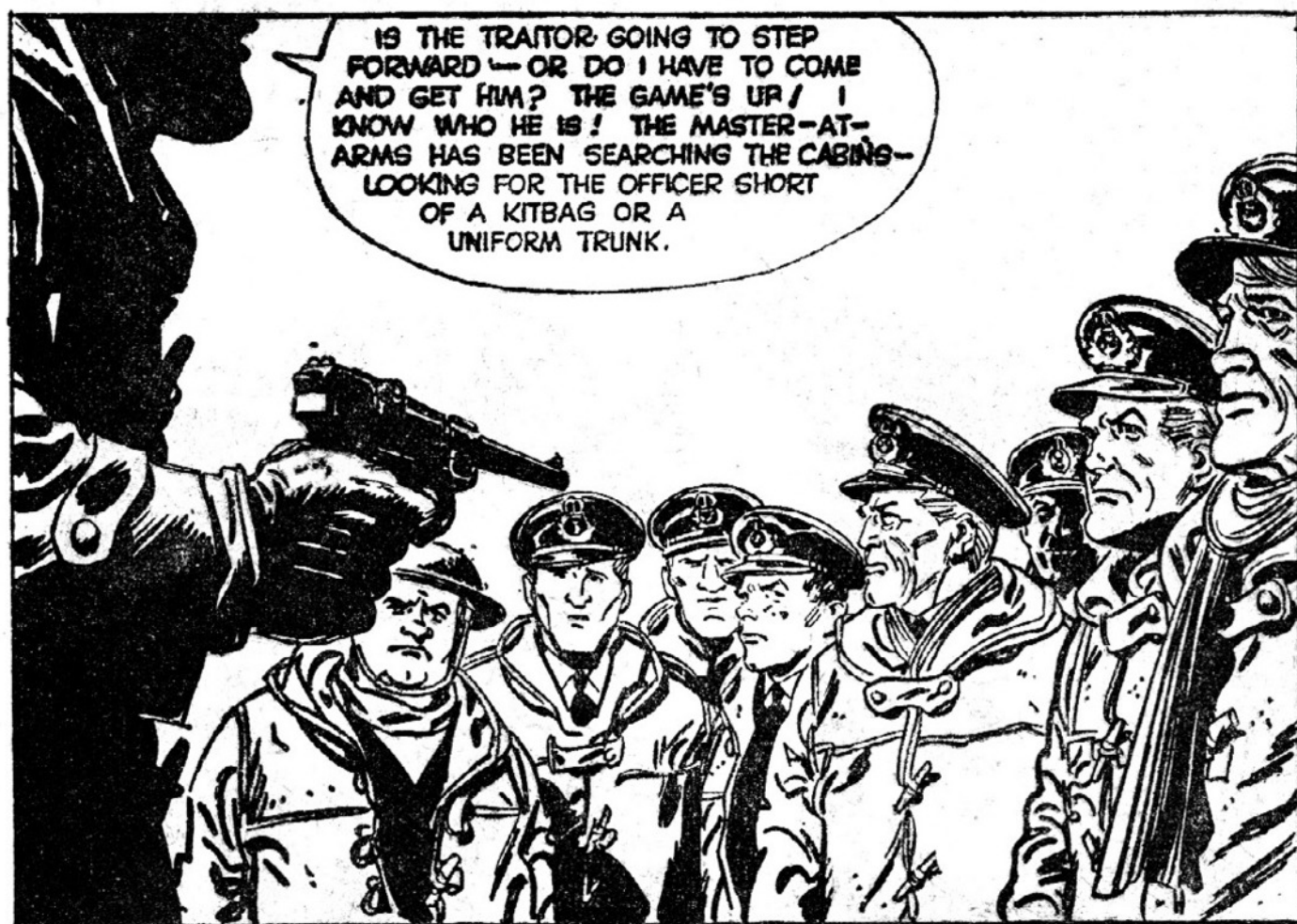


THERE WAS NO DANGER IN
STOPPING NOW. THE NAZI
U-BOAT PACK HAD BEEN
UTTERLY DEFEATED. JIM
STAFFORD WAITED AT THE
RAILS WITH OTHER
OFFICERS OF THE CALEDONIA
AS THE SURVIVORS WERE
HAILED ABOARD.

SORRY LOOKING LOT,
AREN'T THEY,
NOBBY?

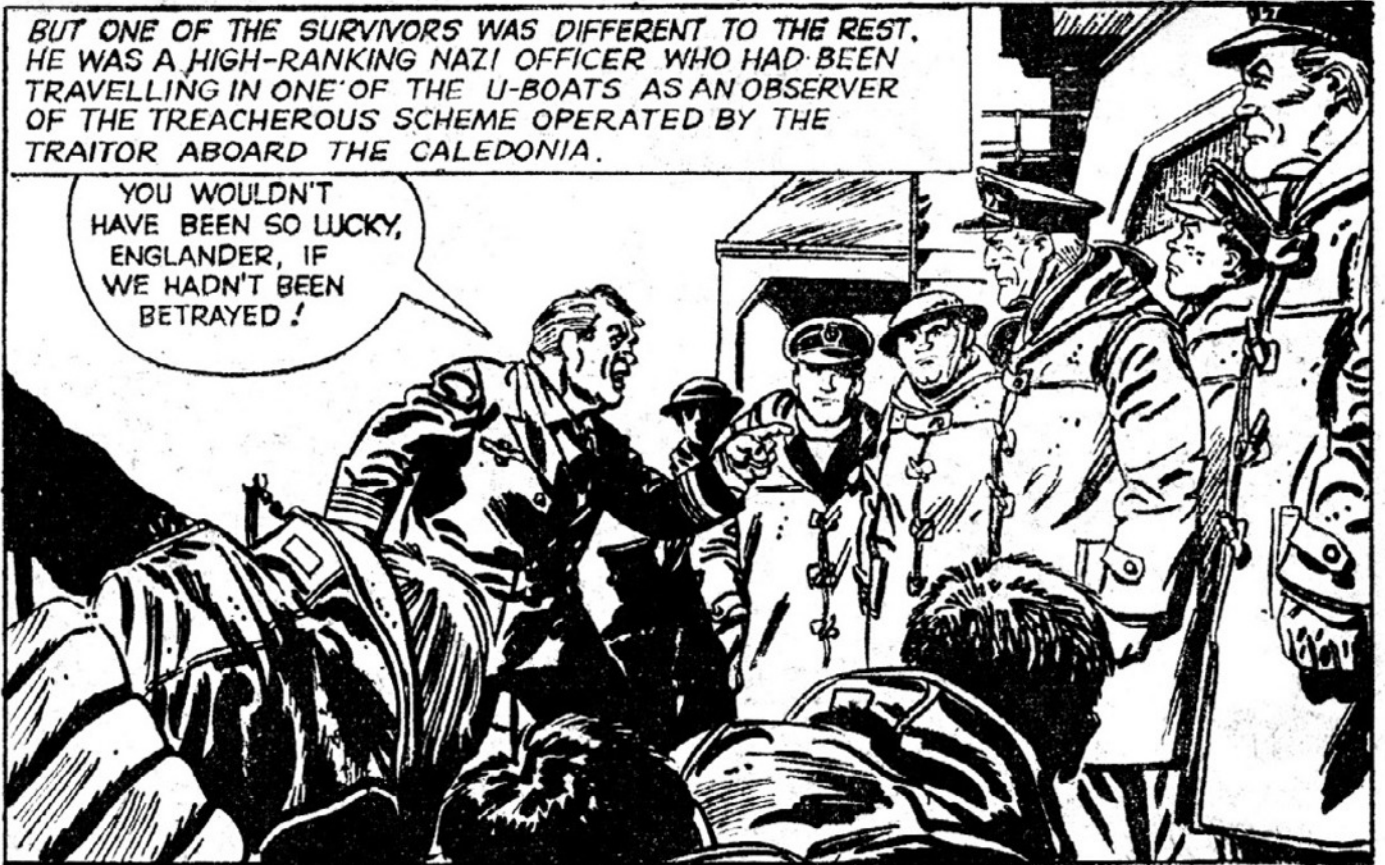
NOT SO
COCKY
NOW!





BUT ONE OF THE SURVIVORS WAS DIFFERENT TO THE REST. HE WAS A HIGH-RANKING NAZI OFFICER WHO HAD BEEN TRAVELLING IN ONE OF THE U-BOATS AS AN OBSERVER OF THE TREACHEROUS SCHEME OPERATED BY THE TRAITOR ABOARD THE CALEDONIA.

YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO LUCKY, ENGLANDER, IF WE HADN'T BEEN BETRAYED!



WE WERE LED INTO A TRAP SET BY THE MAN WE TRUSTED! BUT I'LL EVEN THE SCORE WITH HIM! I'LL —



AS IF BY MAGIC, A GUN HAD APPEARED IN THE NAZI'S HAND. A GUN WHICH SWEEPED ROUND THE RING OF ENCIRCLING BRITISH OFFICERS TO FIND ITS TARGET. JIM STAFFORD LEAPT INTO ACTION.

AAARGH!

DO MY JOB? NOT ON YOUR LIFE!



SLOWLY, UNDER THE SECRET AGENT'S THREATENING GAZE, AN OFFICER STEPPED FORWARD. AT FIRST REAR-ADMIRAL WILSON WAS STRUCK WITH SHOCK!



THE GUNNERY OFFICER'S SHOULDERS SAGGED...

YES, ME, SIR. OH, I DIDN'T DO IT FOR MONEY... BUT BECAUSE THE NAZIS MADE ME DO IT. I HAVE RELATIVES IN OCCUPIED FRANCE, YOU SEE. THE NAZIS CONTACTED ME AND TOLD ME I HAD TO HELP THEM OR MY RELATIVES WOULD SUFFER... OH, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THEM NOW!



AS SOON AS THE NAZIS CONTACTED YOU, YOU SHOULD HAVE REPORTED THE FACT TO THE AUTHORITIES. BRITISH INTELLIGENCE COULD HAVE HELPED YOUR RELATIVES. PERHAPS IT'S NOT TOO LATE NOW—FOR THEM. BUT YOU, I'M AFRAID, MUST PAY THE PENALTY FOR YOUR ACTIONS.



AND SO, MUCH LATER, JIM STAFFORD BACK IN LONDON AGAIN, OPENED AN EVENING PAPER...



SO DRAKE GOT FIFTEEN YEARS, EH? HE WAS LUCKY — BUT PERHAPS HE COULDN'T ENTIRELY HELP DOING WHAT HE DID.

BEHIND HIS DESK, THE MAN CALLED RAVEN ACCEPTED THE PAPER BACK, AND FOLDED IT.



AND THE FOUR WORDS WERE — THANKS TO JIM STAFFORD!

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